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TELECOMMUNICATIONS
AND THE INTERNET



Mary Bono
Congress of the United States
45th District, California

November 16, 2005

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Docket Clerk
Marketing Order Administration Branch
Fruit and Vegetable Programs
AMS, USDA
1400 Independence Avenue, S. W., STOP 0237
Washington, D. C. 20250-0237

Dear Sir/Madam:

Re: FV03-925-1 PR

Federal Register Notices: May 25, 2005, p. 30001; July 25, 2005, p. 42513;
And September 27, 2005, p. 56378

On behalf of the Coachella Valley table grape growers, most of whom reside in my Congressional District, I am pleased to write in support of the above-noticed proposed rule moving the effective date of the table grape marketing order.

My growers and shippers are deeply disturbed over the fact that uninspected and in many cases inferior Chilean table grapes are being sold in the U.S. at the same time that inspected Coachella Valley grapes are being marketed. This action circumvents the purpose of the marketing order which was designed to ensure that American consumers are offered only the highest quality table grape.

Unfortunately, this action has resulted in a tremendous economic hardship for many of the growers whose family-operated farms are in my District. My growers thought in 1987 that a change in the effective date of the marketing order would take care of this problem. However, that has not been the case. Since 1987 the number of growers has declined by 45% while the table grape acreage has been reduced by 55%. If the desert table grape industry is to survive, action must be taken to halt the economic impact of these uninspected inferior imported grape sales during the time our quality grapes are being marketed.

I understand that some representatives of the Chilean table grape industry have alleged that moving the effective date to April 1 will mean more product will be shipped to the U.S. during the month of March. However, I am advised that the Chilean table grape industry is a very sophisticated, efficient industry and that if the industry is required to meet the marketing order requirements at an earlier date they certainly can do so. Certainly the Chileans do not want to lose their largest table grape export market.

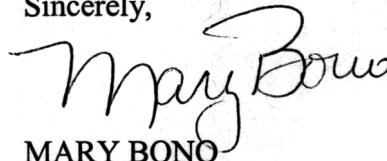
Page 2

There should be no trade repercussions as a result of the proposed change. The proposed change will mean only that imports will have to meet the same requirements of our domestic industry during the marketing order period.

I am aware that the Desert Grape Growers League in responding to the proposed rule will be providing AMS with full information on the situation regarding Chilean table grape imports. This is information they have been gathering for a lengthy period and is fully documented.

I trust you will give full consideration to these comments and the data supplied by the Desert Grape Growers League in support of the proposed rule.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Bono". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mary" and last name "Bono" clearly distinguishable.

MARY BONO
Member of Congress